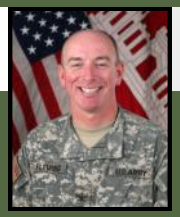

Commander's Desk

Corps continues rapid pace of HSDRRS construction

With this year's hurricane season upon us, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District continues its aggressive pace toward completing the best Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System the Greater New Orleans area has ever had.

The success of this effort comes as a direct result of local, state and federal entities working together toward a common goal -- enabling the type of major investment required in manpower, money and other resources to get the job done.

In many ways, the accomplishments made possible by this cooperative effort are truly unparalleled.

Nearly 133 miles of levees, floodwalls, gated structures and pump stations have been strengthened and improved, helping to form the Greater New Orleans perimeter system.

Major projects like the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal-Lake Borgne Surge Barrier, West Closure Complex and Seabrook Floodgate Complex dot the landscape, each providing visible examples of the massive undertaking required for comprehensive risk reduction in this area.

More importantly, they serve as a reminder of how we have moved the first line of defense away from the major population zones. In total, 69 miles of levees and floodwalls that previously served as the first line of defense have now been relegated to the second line of defense.

As we focus on implementing the remainder of the system, we will continue to work with our stakeholders and partners to achieve the type of permanent and sustainable system the people of southeast Louisiana need. Today, the system is capable of defending against a 100-year storm surge event.

There is always the risk of a storm that exceeds the capacity of any risk reduction system. We encourage communities and local governments to help reduce their risk by including building codes and zoning in their planning that take into account risks associated with tropical events. Individual families can also help to buy down risk through insurance, evacuation plans and by elevating homes.

The Corps is prepared and ready to respond to an event along with stakeholders, partners and local, state and federal agencies. We have the system and teamwork in place to respond to this year's hurricane season.

Essayons!

Col. Ed Fleming

Emergency Operations

New Orleans District prepared for any potential storms this hurricane season

The hurricane season officially started on June 1. Over the past six years, the Corps has designed, constructed and nearly completed the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System, a 133-mile perimeter defense for the five-parish Greater New Orleans area. The system can now defend against a 100-year storm surge and the Corps is prepared and ready to utilize the system to reduce risk from flooding should the area experience a tropical weather event this year.

There are 504 openings in the system which must be closed when a storm approaches. These openings include 13 navigable openings, 145 roadway openings, 42 railroad openings, 145 access openings and 153 drainage openings, as well as six construction gaps where the Corps and its contractors are still working.

Utilizing the new system this year will be a bit different from the past few years. In the recent past, the Corps' Emergency Management team, along with some of the contractors, had closed the system openings and construction gaps. This year, though, the Corps-and-contractor team plans to work with the local sponsor—the state of Louisiana and the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East and West. The Corps anticipates each authority will have their technical representatives participate in closing selected structures and utilizing selected pump stations. This is in preparation for the operational and maintenance responsibilities of the non-Federal sponsor, who owns these structures.

Utilization of colossal structures like the West Closure Complex, the IHNC-Lake Borgne Surge Barrier Sector Gates, the Harvey Floodgates and the Seabrook Floodgate Complex is very complicated work that requires specialized technical capabilities. Some of these structures are the largest of their kind in the nation and/or the world.

The Emergency Management team prepares all year for an emergency or a tropical event. This past April, the team had a practice with the Mississippi Valley Division, and in May the team held "table top exercises" with the expanded team at the New Orleans District. In mid-June the team will hold "field exercises". These will be hands-on exercises held at the HSDRRS structures.

Construction gaps are openings in the system that are under construction, or openings that are used by the contractor to perform work on that section of the system. The perimeter system is 133 miles long, or 702,240 feet. The remaining construction gaps in the system amount to a total of only 500 feet, or approximately one city block.

Larger structures that will be utilized during the mid-June field exercises include the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal -Lake Borgne Surge Barrier, West Closure Complex, Seabrook Floodgate Complex, Harvey Canal Floodgate, Bayou Segnette Gate and Pump Station, Caernarvon Sector Gate and Bayou Verret Sector Gate, as well as the Interim Closure Structures at the London Avenue, Orleans Avenue and 17th Street Outfall Canals. These exercises will go a long way in ensuring that the Corps and its partners can provide 100-year risk reduction for the Greater New Orleans area this year and beyond.

The Caernarvon Sector Gate and Floodwall will reduce risk for portions of St. Bernard Parish.

The West Closure Complex includes the largest drainage pump station in the world and the largest sector gate in the nation.

US Army Corps of Engineers®
New Orleans District
Stakeholder Update
BUILDING STRONG®

Louisiana Coastal Area

New study addresses critical, large-scale Louisiana coastal restoration needs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Louisiana's plan for restoring the Louisiana coast must now include long-term, large-scale restoration efforts that support the sustainability of the Mississippi River Delta for the next several decades. A newly initiated effort, the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Mississippi River Hydrodynamic and Delta Management (MRHDM) Study, will support this long-term goal.

The Corps, in partnership with the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana, has begun the 5-year, $25 million study, which will look at the current and future state of the Mississippi River and its potential resources for coastal restoration: sediment, water and nutrients. This study will determine how and where to use resources in the wetland areas surrounding the river to promote the long-term sustainability of economic, cultural, recreational and ecological functions. As a programmatic study, the MRHDM will inform and support critical LCA studies and other coastal restoration efforts across the state.

With a proposed study area along the Mississippi River from Vicksburg south to the Gulf of Mexico, efforts are under way to collect critical data and develop comprehensive, system-wide hydrodynamic models that will demonstrate how water and sediment move throughout the dynamic river system. In addition, extensive models will be developed for the receiving basins to help the team better understand the benefits and impacts of river diversions on fisheries and habitats, and to be able to use this information to evaluate potential restoration features.

The Corps and CPRA held six public scoping meetings throughout the month of April to engage the public in the initiation of this important study, and also met individually with local government officials. These meetings were designed to simultaneously educate the public on the study and gather input on what they felt the study should consider. The project team received ample public comments on the development of the MRHDM study covering a wide range of topics during these meetings. Notable comments included concerns about the effects of large scale diversions on coastal ecosystems, the sustainability of the Mississippi River's Birds Foot Delta, public involvement opportunities throughout the development of the study and how this study will inform ongoing coastal restoration efforts.

The formal National Environmental Policy Act public scoping period ended on May 4, 2012, but the project development team encourages public comments and suggestions throughout the study process. In addition, presentations will be made by Corps and CPRA team members on the study at the 2012 Intecol Wetlands Conference in Orlando and the 2012 State of the Coast Conference in New Orleans. More information on the study is available on www.lca.gov.

Image courtesy of Andrea Galinksi, CPRA

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